

To: House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water

Submitted by: Linda Hardison Director, OregonFlora

Re: HB3173 (OregonFlora) SUPPORT

As director of OregonFlora, I am writing in support of HB3173 to establish OregonFlora in statute and initiate a sustainable funding stream for the maintenance and further development of OregonFlora's dynamic dataset.

OregonFlora gathers, curates, and shares information about the vascular plants that grow in Oregon without cultivation. By our current count, that's 4,886 unique species of grasses, ferns, trees, herbs, and shrubs. We present this information in the comprehensive, three-volume *Flora of Oregon* books, which feature detailed descriptions, distribution maps, illustrations, and identification keys. General interest chapters precede this technical floristic content in each volume. The upcoming Volume 3 features a chapter highlighting the generations of connection between Indigenous peoples and the plants of this region. Uniquely, it links Indigenous Knowledge with a traditional Western floristic treatment, lifting up the ways the original peoples of this region shaped the plant communities we refer to as "native".

The *Flora* establishes a taxonomic framework for Oregon plant life; it provides documentation of every species, subspecies, or variety in the state, its scientific name, and how we circumscribe that species concept. This is critical because it allows us to accurately share data and be assured all users understand which plant is being referred to.

By creating a digital version of the *Flora of Oregon* through our oregonflora.org website, we can continuously update its information, reflecting the latest taxonomic research and our growing knowledge of plant occurrences across the state. The *Flora* becomes dynamic: an interactive and curated resource that is accessible to everyone.

Here is a [short video](#) demonstrating some features of the website.

OregonFlora informs a diverse group of stakeholders: the horticultural industry with its burgeoning native plant sector; gardeners and landscapers seeking native species that conserve water and improve urban ecology; educators in grade schools, colleges, and informal learning; the outdoor recreation industry; ranchers and farmers. Natural resource managers charged with protecting and restoring habitats rely on OregonFlora to access almost 1.5 million mapped plant records, identification tools, and accurate taxonomy to do their jobs.

Keeping plant diversity information accurate to meet stakeholder needs requires ongoing curation and updates. Imagine trying to restore a degraded habitat without knowing what was there in the first place. Attempting to mitigate the climate emergency without understanding what plant species are adapted to hotter, drier places. Wanting to help pollinators without awareness of what—or where—their nectar sources can be found. Losing a cornucopia of not-yet-discovered foods, fibers, and medicines to invasive species, development, and diminished genetic diversity.

You can't manage, protect, or appreciate what you don't know.

OregonFlora's 30 years of exacting database design and data management have helped to build plant diversity knowledge that informs all Oregonians. Sustainable support for the continued maintenance and development of OregonFlora will help our state wisely steward its precious botanical resources, ensuring a healthy economic and ecological future.

I urge the committee to support HB3173.